



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Advisory group to offer guidance on cattle identification technology

OLYMPIA – An advisory panel of dairy producers, cattle ranchers, feedlot operators and others concerned about the beef industry will offer their recommendations as the state continues to develop a technologically advanced cattle identification system. The goal of the system is to trace back animal movements within 48 hours to limit the spread of animal disease outbreaks, such as bovine brucellosis, tuberculosis or foot-and-mouth disease.

Washington is participating in the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), a program that will be used to identify animals and track their movement between premises. The state veterinarian and other animal health officials will use the information to enhance their emergency response capabilities and to identify where sick animals contracted a disease or where they may have infected others.

As required by a law adopted last legislative session, Valoria Loveland, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), has appointed twenty people to the NAIS Cattle Advisory Group. The group will submit a report of their recommendations to the legislature by Dec. 1, 2006. The names of the participants can be found at: www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Animal_Premise/CattleAdvisoryGroup.htm.

“We need broad participation in the animal ID program if we are going to strengthen our ability to react to disease outbreaks,” said Dr. Leonard Eldridge, Washington State Veterinarian. “Outbreaks can be devastating to whole sectors of the agriculture economy. With the involvement of our partners from the industry in this new advisory group, we will be able to develop practical solutions to improve cattle identification and prevent huge economic losses in the future.”

Livestock owner participation in NAIS is voluntary. There are no enforcement mechanisms or penalties for not participating in the system.

While the panel will advise the department on cattle identification, owners of many types of animals are voluntarily participating in NAIS to help protect the health of their herds or flocks. Other species registering in NAIS include: horses, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, turkeys, llamas, alpacas, emus and ostriches.

Since January 2005, WSDA has registered nearly 1,000 premises where animals are pastured or stabled, as well as feedlots, sale yards and other areas where animals could exchange illnesses. Registering a premises is free and takes about 10 minutes on the WSDA Web site: www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Animal_Premise.

A new state law goes into effect this week that protects from public review all animal identification data collected by the state. Last session, the Legislature exempted from public disclosure laws any information

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submitted as part of NAIS. Only Washington animal health officials and their designees have access to this system. Livestock owners can be confident that proprietary information about their businesses and farms will not be available to the public.

The second stage of this voluntary program will involve the identification of individual animals or flocks of birds. The third stage of the program will include the voluntary reporting of movement between premises or a change in ownership of animals and flocks. WSDA hopes to begin animal identification in early 2007 and voluntary movement reporting in mid 2007.

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